

DIALOGUE

**REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN
ARAB AND JEWISH ACTIVISTS OF PALESTINE
IN DEFENCE OF THE RIGHT OF RETURN, FOR ONE STATE SOLUTION
END OF TERM REPORT PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, HEBREW AND FRENCH**

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PNC Commission on the Right of Return

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Presentation

The « two State » solution to the conflict that has been devastating Palestine for several decades is an official solution replying to political necessity. At whatever cost, with one “peace plan” after another, the UN, successive American governments and in their wake, the European Union have tried in vain to impose a permanent partition of Palestine, i.e. a physical separation of the populations that live between the Mediterranean and the Jordan which entails territorial segregation of Palestinians.

As you can read in the different articles published in this edition of Dialogue, this policy enters into collision with the reality of Zionism that demands exclusively, all the territory of historic Palestine, and only conceives the existence of the Palestinian people as confined behind secure barriers, with no rights, no future.

But for this situation - that has lasted for more than sixty years - to be accepted, the myth of shared responsibilities had to be invented. In this way Israeli intransigence would be explained by the refusal of Palestinians to recognise the very convenient “right of the Jews” to take their place.

Once again, why couldn't populations of different origins live together with the same rights if it weren't for very material political interests?

To encourage an exchange of dialogue on the basis of facts and arguments is a necessary condition for all democratic advances in this area. Can there be democracy without equal rights in practice and not just formal equal rights in legal terms? Can practical democracy be achieved outside of the framework of a single State in which all components have the same rights? Can this happen without implementing the right to return for Palestinian refugees? These questions are still of extreme importance to-day. We invite our readers to pursue this discussion.

The editors.

Short web-interview with Prof. Haim Bresheeth, of the One State in Palestine group

(april 24, 2012)

On the occasion of the publication of an international appeal for "A single secular democratic state in Palestine: A Republic of all its citizens!" we questioned Professor Haim Bresheeth, who is the originator of this appeal.

Dialogue

You were very young when you first arrived in Israel, shortly after its foundation. Could you explain to us how you came to your conviction for engaging in activism for the one-state solution?

What is your feeling concerning the evolution of Israeli society, especially after last summer's social movement, in which most of the objectors refused any comment on the fate of the Palestinian people, as though it were possible to dissociate the two situations? According to you, how can the one-state solution be supported and implemented in the Israeli society of today? Is it possible on a broad scale and in which conditions? What are your perspectives with this appeal?

Haim Bresheeth

I have been born in Italy, in a DP camp near Rome, in 1946, to two refugees of the death camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau, who found their way to Italy after the end of WW2. We arrived in Israel in June 1948, on the first boat which entered Israel after its independence and in May 1948.

On our arrival, my father was forced to fight at Latroun, despite his avowed pacifism and refusal to carry arms, and was deployed as a medic. My mother and I stayed in the refugee centre in Atlith, until the end of the fighting, when we were all re-housed in a flat at Jebaliya (later to be renamed as Giva'at Aliya...) to the South of Jaffa, which was of course the former home of a Palestinian family, expelled with thousands of others when the Irgun has

conquered Jaffa and forcibly got rid of its indigenous population, most of whom boarded fishing vessels trying to reach Gaza or Lebanon. Many were lost at sea.

The neighbourhood was most unusual in the Israeli context – the newly-housed survivors of the camps who made the majority of the population, shared the lovely town with few Palestinian families who have stayed behind, making some of the poorest population of the new state. Jews have shared a school with the Palestinian Arab children, and Arabic was taught as well as Hebrew. None of this could happen today. This background, I believe, made me able to understand and sympathize with the Palestinians as I grew up, despite the marked racism of the Jewish Israeli society in which I was brought up. Typically, the Palestinian children who came from the same background have not made it to university, or to a middle class occupation – they have remained on the margins of Israeli society, severely limited by its inbuilt racism towards the Palestinians.

If we think of the so called 'tents protest' last summer, in the context of the great upheaval in the Arab world, the Israeli protest is seen in its proper proportions – a middle class protest with nationalist and populist agenda, excluding the Palestinians and their occupation, which was evident by its total suppression by the protest leader. Ironically, it was the only protest movement in the Middle East which was not brutalized by the state police forces, not a single protester was hurt; it seems to have been the easiest to defeat by the regime in power, as the commitment of the protesters to change the system was somewhat limited in comparison to the societies around it. Now, almost a year after it started, it seems clear that it achieved nothing, and its leadership was co-opted by the Israeli regime – both the main leaders of the 'movement' were sent by the Israeli government of speaking tours of European capitals, ma-

king the case against BDS... The protesters who were not prepared to rethink their racism and colonial role, ended up with nothing, after the most impressive marches in Israel. This is not a movement which will end racism, or the occupation. This is not a movement for real social change, but a volkish populist movement, which cannot defeat the populist fascist, Netanyahu. In short – if any of us was hopeful about a change from within, the Tents Protest has proven how impossible this is in Israel, even more impossible than change in most Arab countries.

So if racism cannot be defeated by popular forces in Israel, if such protest that exists chooses to totally deny the main issue on the Israeli political agenda – the occupation and subjugation of the Palestinian people – then opposition to Zionism is not likely to come from this quarter; on the contrary – the leaders are happy to serve as a tool of the regime they are supposedly against. To my mind, this means that the end of racist and unjust, brutal practices and policies of Zionism will not come from within, and that without an end to this colonial project, there can be no just peace for anyone, and no just resolution of the Palestinian question, created by Zionism and its western allies in crime. As long as the Zionist state stays intact, we have a situation reminiscent of South Africa under apartheid – there can be no resolution unless this corrosive, toxic system is replaced, as was apartheid in South Africa, by a fully democratic system in the whole of Palestine. The country, so unjustly divided by the UN in 1947, leading to the brutal expulsion of 800,000 Palestinians from their homes, almost 80% of the whole nation, by the IDF, and by the Israeli government refusing their return, has been torn and mutilated ever since. This neo-colonial enterprise, serving the aims of western capitalism, has not only caused the Palestine continued Nakba, but has also poisoned Middle-Eastern politics with anti-Arab, Islamopho-

bic attitudes and positions which have fed the right in Europe, North America and elsewhere. To Israelis, it has brought no peace, but a long series of destructive wars: to Palestinians and other Arabs, it has brought destruction beyond belief, racism, and xenophobia, and continued oppression and loss. This has got to come to an end, like it did in South Africa.

Only a state based on total equality of all citizens within Palestine – a secular democratic state of all its citizens, can offer Jews and Arabs some hope. Once citizenship is not based on racial and racist definition, but on equality for all, can offer peace, justice and the rule of law in a country which has seen more suffering than most. To achieve this, historical injustices must be reversed, as much as is humanly possible – Palestinians who were expelled, and their families, must be allowed to return to their country, as well as to be properly compensated for their lost land and property. Such a state in the whole of the country will not allow racist treatment of any kind, and will not offer unjust privileges to ethnic groups of any kind.

The large group of Palestinian and Israeli academics and activists who have worked on the One State in Palestine declaration and its detailed principles, has tried, for the first time, to confront the deep divisions and inequalities which were forced by Zionism, not just on Palestinians, but also on Mizrahi Jews, in order to offer a just foundation for the future of life together of both communities, so as to allow them to build a commonality across the national and ethnic dividers, a commonality of civic and democratic nature, leading to more hopeful and peaceful future to all the people of Palestine, Israelis and Palestinians. This foundation needs further elaboration, detailing and development, which our group is working towards. We see our limited effort as an icon and symbol of the future cooperation which the democratic Republic of Palestine shall be based upon.

A single secular democratic state in Palestine:

A Republic of all its citizens!

(march 03, 2012)

For 63 years, ever since the fateful UN Resolution 181, Palestinians have lived in terror and fear. In the 1948 Nakba, which followed the UN partition resolution, Israel conquered 78% of Palestine and expelled most of its population, almost 800,000 people, from their homes, villages and towns. It also made the remainder of the Palestinians still under its control second-class citizens and discriminated against Mizrahi (Arab and Sephardic) Jews in what it defined as a Jewish state – not a state of its citizens; today at least 20% of the citizens of Israel are not Jewish. The Palestinian refugees were never allowed to return home, despite UN Resolution 194 of December 1948, and countless UN resolutions since, affirming their right of return. Today over six million Palestinians and their descendants are refugees into the third generation.

In 1967, the remainder of historic Palestine was occupied by Israel. Every Palestinian in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza has lost his/her human and political rights under a brutal settler-colonial military occupation. After 1967 there followed a fast colonisation project, in violation of international law and the 4th Geneva Convention, of settling Israeli Jews in the newly conquered territories, expelling and dispossessing Palestinians even further.

Israel has since disregarded all UN resolutions demanding it withdraws from the Occupied Territories and has continued to build illegal settlements, roads and army camps. It has continued to suppress brutally and dispossess the Palestinian population under its military rule. Internationally Israel has set up powerful lobbies which have sought to silence the voice of reason among Jews across the world. Domestically it has constructed a highly militarised society, armed-to-teeth with weapons of mass destruction which renders the situation in Palestine-Israel extremely

volatile and highly dangerous not only to Palestinians but also Israeli Jews.

The Oslo Accords of 1993, which were the result of secret negotiations between Israel and the PLO, laid the ground for an agreement which in theory would have returned 22% of historic Palestine back to Palestinian rule, along the lines of the 1949 ceasefire boundaries. This agreement was systematically violated by Israel which has continued to confiscate more Palestinian land, build more Israeli settlements and kill more Palestinians. It was clear from the outset that Israel had no intention of withdrawing either the settlements or its army from the West Bank and East Jerusalem – the number of its settlers living illegally in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has in fact trebled since the signing of the Oslo Accords, rendering the two-state solution completely unrealistic. The current policies of the Quartet are aimed at funding (not ending) the occupation.

In fact the two-state solution was never real or fair. It has disregarded justice for most Palestinians; but even this unjust 'solution' was systematically undermined by Israel through more land grabs and more illegal settlers in the projected state for Palestinians. Israel made sure the two-state solution based on the 1967 boundaries would never become a reality. Most Palestinians and many Israelis have recognised this fact for decades. They have instead desired an alternative solution, a solution based on justice and non-separation, a solution which will bring an end to the trauma and suffering of the Palestinian refugees, a solution which will end the settler-colonial, military and rule of Zionism over historic Palestine, a solution which will treat all citizens, residents and 'absentees' of historic Palestine as equals and fairly. Such a solution is the single secular (in the

sense of separating religion from the state), non-sectarian, democratic state in the whole of historic Palestine: A STATE OF ALL ITS CITIZENS.

A group of Palestinians and Israelis has been working on the basics of the one-state vision and foundational principles of a Republic in historic Palestine. They

have mapped out the road to peace, reconciliation, equality and coexistence in a democratic state, a state which would bring an end to illegal occupation and the unequal racist and separatist practices of apartheid Zionism. The document presented here outlines the foundations for a future constitution of the Republic of Palestine.



<http://www.1not2.org>

Not All Israeli Citizens Are Equal

by Yousef Munayyer (May 23, 2012)

I'M a Palestinian who was born in the Israeli town of Lod, and thus I am an Israeli citizen. My wife is not; she is a Palestinian from Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Despite our towns being just 30 miles apart, we met almost 6,000 miles away in Massachusetts, where we attended neighboring colleges.

A series of walls, checkpoints, settlements and soldiers fill the 30-mile gap between our hometowns, making it more likely for us to have met on the other side of the planet than in our own backyard.

Never is this reality more profound than on our trips home from our current residence outside Washington.

Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion International Airport is on the outskirts of Lod (Lydda in Arabic), but because my wife has a Palestinian ID, she cannot fly there; she is relegated to flying to Amman, Jordan. If we plan a trip together — an enjoyable task for most couples — we must prepare for a logistical nightmare that reminds us of our profound inequality before the law at every turn.

Even if we fly together to Amman, we are forced to take different bridges, two hours apart, and endure often humiliating waiting and questioning just to cross into Israel and the West Bank. The laws conspire to separate us.

If we lived in the region, I would have to forgo my residency, since Israeli law prevents my wife from living with me in Israel. This is to prevent what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu once referred to as "demographic spillover." Additional Palestinian babies in Israel are considered "demographic threats" by a state constantly battling to keep a Jewish majority. (Of course, Israelis who

marry Americans or any non-Palestinian foreigners are not subjected to this treatment.)

Last week marked Israel's 64th year of independence; it is also when Palestinians commemorate the Nakba, or "catastrophe," during which many of Palestine's native inhabitants were turned into refugees.

In 1948, the Israeli brigade commander Yitzhak Rabin helped expel Lydda's Palestinian population. Some 19,000 of the town's 20,000 native Palestinian inhabitants were forced out. My grandparents were among the 1,000 to remain.

They were fortunate to become only internally displaced and not refugees. Years later my grandfather was able to buy back his own home — a cruel absurdity, but a better fate than that imposed on most of his neighbors, who were never permitted to re-establish their lives in their hometowns.

Three decades later, in October 1979, this newspaper reported that Israel barred Rabin from detailing in his memoir what he conceded was the "expulsion" of the "civilian population of Lod and Ramle, numbering some 50,000." Rabin, who by then had served as prime minister, sought to describe how "it was essential to drive the inhabitants out."

Two generations after the Nakba, the effect of discriminatory Israeli policies still reverberates. Israel still seeks to safeguard its image by claiming to be a bastion of democracy that treats its Palestinian citizens well, all the while continuing illiberal policies that target this very population. There is a long history of such discrimination.

In the 1950s new laws permitted the state

to take control over Palestinians' land by classifying them "absentees." Of course, it was the state that made them absentees by either preventing refugees from returning to Israel or barring internally displaced Palestinians from having access to their land. This last group was ironically termed "present absentees" — able to see their land but not to reach it because of military restrictions that ultimately resulted in their watching the state confiscate it. Until 1966, Palestinian citizens were governed under martial law.

Today, a Jew from any country can move to Israel, while a Palestinian refugee, with a valid claim to property in Israel, cannot. And although Palestinians make up about 20 percent of Israel's population, the 2012 budget allocates less than 7 percent for Palestinian citizens.

Tragically for Palestinians, Zionism requires the state to empower and maintain a Jewish majority even at the expense of its non-Jewish citizens, and the occupation of the West Bank is only one part of it. What exists today between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is

therefore essentially one state, under Israeli control, where Palestinians have varying degrees of limited rights: 1.5 million are second-class citizens, and four million more are not citizens at all. If this is not apartheid, then whatever it is, it's certainly not democracy.

The failure of Israeli and American leaders to grapple with this nondemocratic reality is not helping. Even if a two-state solution were achieved, which seems fanciful at this point, a fundamental contradiction would remain: more than 35 laws in ostensibly democratic Israel discriminate against Palestinians who are Israeli citizens.

For all the talk about shared values between Israel and the United States, democracy is sadly not one of them right now, and it will not be until Israel's leaders are willing to recognize Palestinians as equals, not just in name, but in law.

Yousef Munayyer is executive director of the Jerusalem Fund. First publication in the New York Times. Published in dialogue with the author permission



One state for Palestinians and Israelis

by Ahmed Moor (March, 03 2012)

For decades the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has eluded well-intentioned peacemakers. Diplomats have talked, shaken hands, snapped photos — and returned home from summits with strikingly little to show for their efforts. Meanwhile, the occupation of Palestinian territories grew more restrictive. Israel's settlements developed into towns and small cities as Palestinians were penned into smaller and smaller spaces. While diplomats shuffled from Madrid to Oslo to Wye River, from Camp David to Taba to Annapolis and resort towns in between, the illegal settlements expanded. And the window for two states closed.

Palestine and Israel are two parts of the same country — something those who have not been to the region may find hard to imagine. The area of Mandate Palestine — that's Israel, the West Bank and Gaza — is about the size of New Jersey. The country is so small that Palestinians on the hilly West Bank can view the Israeli coastline from their homes (never mind that restrictions on Palestinian movement have prevented the vast majority from ever visiting the sea). Moreover, one out of five Israelis is a Palestinian, and about one of every six residents of the occupied territories is a Jewish settler.

The degree to which the country is a single, indivisible unit is sometimes underscored by the most mundane experiences. A Palestinian friend recently told me about being pulled over for speeding in the West Bank. The person who ticketed him was an Israeli army official.

Yes, Palestine has been colonized out of existence, and the Israeli army is busy policing traffic.

The army's nearness to the average Pa-

lestinian extends beyond settlements. The region has few freshwater resources. In Israel, maintaining access to water is a matter of national security. The mountain aquifer underneath the West Bank's rocky topography is one major source, and the army regularly destroys "unauthorized" wells and cisterns to secure Israeli hegemony over the scarce resource.

It was awareness that there will never be a viable Palestinian state that prompted me to work with other Harvard students to organize a one-state conference this weekend ([www.http://onestateconference.org](http://onestateconference.org)). Our work has been informed by the uncontroversial view that all people are created equal. Assessing an environment in which Israel controls the lives of 4 million people and deprives them of basic human rights, we ask whether there is an alternative: Can the one-state solution deliver equal rights to everyone?

Critics say that raising the question of equal rights in Israel/Palestine reveals our motives; we seek to destroy Israel, they say. They contend civil rights for everyone in the country will mean "the elimination of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people."

For some, everything that happens in the Middle East is viewed through the prism of what is best for the Jewish people. But the Palestinians are people, too. Preserving "Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people" is a costly endeavor. And I regret that the cost is borne almost exclusively by Palestinians living under apartheid.

It is also worth asking whether permanent occupation is good for the Jewish people. Palestinians learn about thousands of years of Jewish suffering, perse-

cution and genocide, and we wonder whether Israel can really be the height of Jewish achievement. Did the Jewish people survive for so long only to become another people's occupiers and permanent oppressors?

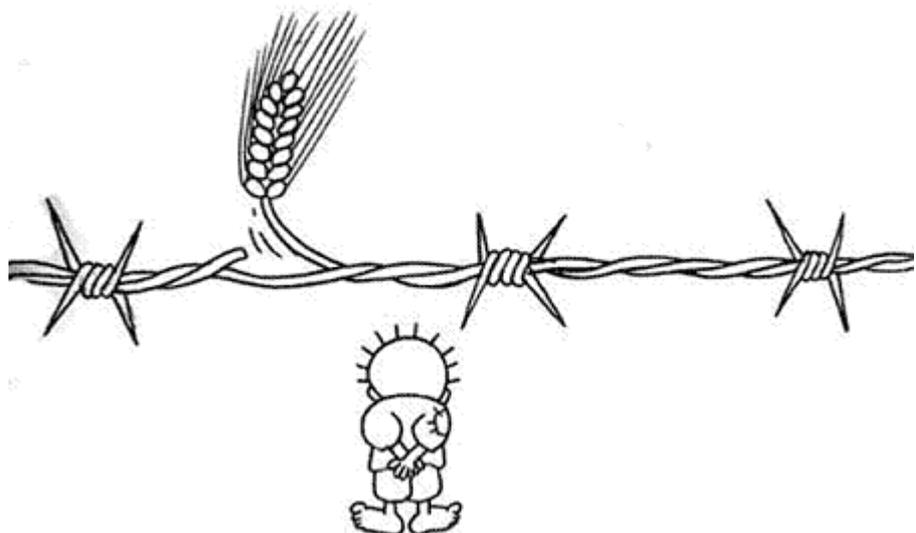
Many of my Jewish friends and peers in Israel and in America answer that question resoundingly: No. Peter Beinart has done an admirable job chronicling the movement of young American Jews away from Israel. But in Israel, something different is happening.

About a year ago, I marched down a winding lane in the windswept village of Bilin to protest the Israeli seizure of village lands. The nonviolent action was organized by the village's Popular Com-

mittee, and, as is typical, a group of Israelis joined in solidarity. Many of these young people had publicly rejected their Jewish privilege. They were there because we were equals, united in our rejection of military occupation and apartheid.

In Israel/Palestine, the struggle for human dignity and freedom is edifying. The call for equal rights is energizing and uplifting. And in a region where hope founders and falters so frequently, that's saying a lot.

Ahmed Moor is a Palestinian-American journalist, blogger and activist. First publication in the Washington Post. Published in dialogue with the author permission



למען זכות השיבה
של הפליטים הפלסטינים
ולמען מדינה אחת על פני שטחה
ההיסטורי של פלסטין כולה

من اجل حق عودة
اللاجئين الفلسطينيين
من اجل دولة واحدة على
اراضي فلسطين التاريخية

IN DEFENCE OF THE PALESTINIAN
REFUGEES' RIGHT OF RETURN
FOR A SINGLE STATE
ON THE WHOLE TERRITORY
OF HISTORIC PALESTINE

Interview with Salah Salah, Chair of the PNC. Commission on the Right of Return

(March 17th 2012)

What is your appreciation on the current relations between Fatah and Hamas?

- It is the current situation which compels the two organisations to talk to one another. The one rules the West Bank while the other rules the Gaza Strip. They can no longer attempt anything against each other and are compelled to have constructive relations. That is what they are implementing concretely in the framework of the so-called "reconciliation" agenda whose latest act was played out in Qatar (prior to this, meetings had taken place in Egypt, Mecca, Sanaa and Damascus ...)

Fatah and Hamas do not seek to realise the unity of the Palestinian people but they are toiling the line imposed by the donor states (especially the Gulf countries) and by Egypt, which is the US agenda. They have to agree on the two state guideline, therefore give up on the right to return.

Achieving the unity of the Palestinian people would first require engaging a dialogue with every Palestinian faction and party. Such dialogue would essentially drive at focussing on the political treatment of the process that resulted in the Oslo Accords. The process has been a proven failure. What is to be done is to set up a new way to view the fight against Israeli occupation. Finally, the unity of the Palestinian people involves rebuilding the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) with all its organisations on the basis of its founding principles.

Fatah and Hamas have embraced the idea of complying with the Oslo Accords so much so that if Fatah runs the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank, it can be said that Hamas runs the PA in the Gaza Strip. That is why, if the fight is to

continue on an independent line, the PLO will have to be rebuilt.

- Apparently, Hamas, which has just moved its headquarters to Damascus, more and more clearly aligns itself with the Gulf countries, notably Qatar...

- Hamas leads the PA in Gaza. Keeping that place obliged it to offer assurances in order to retain its position, therefore to give up on its drive for the liberation of the entire Palestinian territory, which fits in with the two state orientations. Hamas agrees with Fatah for the creation of a Palestinian state. It no longer defends its slogan of armed liberation and is fully engaged in the truce. It is also engaged by forcing the other factions (People's resistance committees, Islamic Jihad, the armed groups of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)) to comply with the truce. In the latest attacks on Gaza, several leaders of armed groups were targeted. Hamas immediately stepped in as a go-between with Egypt to halt Palestinian fight back.

During the reconciliation meeting in Cairo Machaal appointed to Abu Mazen the task of continuing the negotiations with the State of Israel. In Doha in Qatar, he accepted Abu Mazen taking charge of setting up the transitional government. When Khalid Machaal accepts all this, it means acceptance of Abu Mazen's political programme.

- Is Hamas one-minded on those issues?

- There is difference within Hamas. By and large, Hamas comprises three currents. The majority one, at the centre, is the Khalid Machaal current and two opposed wings, one of which is the one led by Haniyeh. The most serious differences are kept in line by the decisions of their Consultative Council (*alshora*) which has the capacity to solve all the differ-

ences. The Council's views are closely related to Mechaal's moderate stand. Within Hamas, the minority wings, the opposition, respect the framework of the Consultative Council. If inside structures fail, it is the international leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood which steps in to settle disagreements.

- *You said that one of the objectives of the Israeli attack was possibly to test Hamas and see what it was prepared to finally resort to.*

- This was one of the several purposes of Israeli attacks. The first objective, - you can take Israel State's word for it – purposed to test the capacity of the anti missile shield. It also made it possible to gauge the range and destructive capacities of the missiles which the various Palestinian factions have at their disposal, some of them rather hi-tech. The Israeli power wants to know the nature of those weapons – defensive weapons for Palestinians – especially in anticipation of a possible attack on Iran's nuclear sites.

- *Outside Fatah and Hamas, what are the independent Palestinian organisations?*

- There are groups of activists who take independent actions, such as the one “In defence of the PLO charter”, comprising former executive members of the PLO, and members of the National Council. Youth movements have formed and are developing in Lebanon, Gaza, the West Bank, throughout the Diaspora. Their major call is to rebuild PLO on the basis of its Charter, to organise elections to the National Council, which would include Palestinians from around the world. Beyond this, a growing number of people worldwide have decided to boycott the State of Israel.

- *Can you come back to the place of Syria in the Palestinian national movement ... while keeping in mind that Assad never shrank from making use of and slaughtering Palestinians for his own political ends?*

- There have been several phases in the position of Syria. During the '50s and '60s, at the beginning of resistance, Syria gave assistance and enabled the resistance to store weapons, to open training camps. Free circulation existed between Lebanon and Jordan but, in exchange, Palestinians were not permitted to fight from Syrian borders. In a second phase, Syria played a negative role as in 1976. The Palestinian resistance had sided with Lebanese resistance against the separatists and phalangists. Syrian troops entered Lebanon to stamp down separatists and nationalist forces. Fatah, PFLP and other factions had taken a position against Syrian invasion whereas other groups, such as the General Command, as Saïqa and others supported armed intervention. A third period in the relations was opened after 1982, with deepening rift between Palestinians. On the one hand there was the leadership linked to Abu Amar, who was siding with Egypt. There was the political premises of the political diversion which, from negotiation to negotiation, finally resulted in the Oslo Accords. Other currents stood up against that political agenda, especially the Salvation Front mainly led by PFLP. At that time, Syria which openly disagreed with Egypt, however left Palestinian fractions solve their own problems among themselves, and then tried to use, and then manipulate the Salvation Front, egging it to attack Abu Amar and his allies. Actually Syria's action tended to make Palestinian inner differences come out. The Palestinian fractions refused and Syria drove Lebanese nationalist forces to launch an all-out attack on the Pales-

tinian resistance in Lebanon. Only the Amal movement accepted, in conjunction with Lebanese forces, to engage an attack on Palestinians; they besieged refugee camps, and tried to force their way in to erase any resistance. The period from 1985 to 1987 was the most brutal one. At that time there were several attempted discussions with the Arab League, Iran and even Saudi Arabia but the war on camps ceased only after Amal had realised that he would never pit Palestinians against each other. Syria also realised it would not manage to set Palestinians at each other's throats. The eruption of Intifada urged Amal to stop the war, under the guise of paying homage to the Intifada. It was Syria which was pulling the strings behind the stage.

Syria always hosted the offices and headquarters of most Palestinian organisations, except Fatah. Palestinian presence in Syria was of no military use since the country requested it not to start from its borders. Today, the factions have a neutral or supportive position towards the regime since it is clear that if the regime is overthrown, the alternative is the one supported by the United States and Arab reactionaries which meets the Israelis and it would be a disaster. The Syrian opposition, backed by the reactionaries cannot side with the Palestinian people. Palestinian factions are well aware that they cannot rely on the Syrian National Council and the Free Syrian Army.

- Takeover by the reactionaries you are mentioning would be a step further on the way towards Broader Middle East, for which one of the prerequisites implies stamping down the refugees and their rights.

- Such coming together is indeed a part of the Broader Middle East project, which implies doing away with the de-

mands of the Palestinians centred on the right to return of the refugees and the rebuilding of the PLO, torn apart by the Oslo Accords. If the project was to come into being, it should put an end to any resistance and break the national unity of the Palestinians, which tends towards rebuilding the PLO. They will pretend to the refugees that the right to return is done and finished, but this will not happen. In the refugee camps, the right to return is part and parcel of Palestinians' daily lives, for the children, everywhere. It is a question tied to their very existence. Conferences and congresses meet everywhere on the issue of the right to return, inside the camps as well as outside in the Diaspora. In all the refugee camps a massive march to cross the borders is preparing for May 15th with the support of many, as a symbol of the unity of the Palestinian people, which is the unity of the refugees demanding their rights.

- In this framework, what is your opinion on the boycott campaign against the state of Israel the Boycott, Disinvestment Sanction (BDS) you were mentioning before, and which is relayed in many places in the West to support and defend the so-called two state solution?

- BDS is the international organisation to pressure Israel into recognising Palestinian rights. It is the recognition that Israel is stealing lands that never belonged to it. This State which plunders the natural resources of an entire people must be boycotted. In this sense, the campaign should be encouraged; it is very positive that numerous academics should boycott Israeli universities to show that they refuse to be accomplices. It is an international movement to give a message to this State that is opposed to democracy. It should be widely publicised that Israel is a violator. Naturally there are hidden mo-

tivations, especially from those who defend the two state solutions. But whatever the motivations, pressure must be applied. At one point, even those who advocate the two states will see by themselves that the State of Israel will always refuse them because, unless pressure, compulsion is applied, it will never recognise Palestinians' rights. So what other solution unless the one which already *de*

facto exists, bar democracy, i.e. the single state with one citizenship. This idea is gathering momentum. Every year, conferences are organised on this subject, especially in the United States and it is worth noting that many Jews attend. It is very important for us to keep track of those activities the more so when they are organised in the United States.



Salah Salah

Virginia Tilley: The One-State Solution

A breakthrough for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock (The University of Michigan Press – 2005)

by Sam Ayache

Virginia Tilley is an American academic specialized in the comparative study of racial and ethnic conflicts. She has been in charge of the South African project on Governance and Democracy at the Council for Research in Human Sciences. The comparison she makes – she is not the only one to have done so – between the bantustans of the South African apartheid regime and the status of Palestinian occupied Territories is based on her accurate knowledge of the situation in South Africa.

John Strawson of East London University (United Kingdom) is one of those who oppose any comparison between the State of Israel and the Apartheid regime. Strawson (1) promotes the Oslo Accords and advocates the recognition of the State of Israel. He criticizes Virginia Tilley's paper saying that she ignores religious tensions, non-existent in South Africa, but which run high in Palestine. He affirms that the context has bred religious extremism, also unknown in South Africa. He says that comparing South Africa to Palestine is "casual, unhistorical, and ultimately unhelpful".

Has Mr Strawson indeed read Ms Tilley's work? The criticisms which he articulates are wholly unfounded. Ms Tilley explains that the "devastating terror attacks" are the result of "Palestinian Bantustans", which are "sealed vessels designed to doom the Palestinians to mounting poverty and social disintegration." Contrary to what Mr Strawson argues, Virginia Tilley correctly points to the root cause of the violence: social disintegration in Palestinian Bantustans are the breeding ground of violence and tensions in Palestine. She specifies that "a Bantustan state could not possibly generate a stable peace."

Did Ms Tilley oppose the "two state solu-

tion" after the Oslo Accords I and II (1993 and 1995)? She says that the solution appeared as a possibility "to some hopeful observers". But, when her book was published in 2005, Virginia considered that the "solution" was "a fantasy theory involving non-existent conditions".

The book was published in 2005, shortly before the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (September 2005) and long before Salam Fayyad, the Palestinian Authority's (PA) Prime Minister launched the process of "unilateral declaration of independence" (UDI) aimed at securing the recognition of the State of Palestine by "the international Community", i.e. the major powers represented in the "United Nation System". True, the PA's move failed - as could have been foreseen - at the Security Council, but the PA received the support of a number of European Union diplomats in a vote at the UNESCO last November (2).

Ms Tilley wonders what part the European Union could play in order to counter the US policies of support to Israel, the organizing of the economic boycott of Israel, mentioning the resolutions voted at the European Parliament in 2002 and 2003. She thinks that "the EU is no passive recipient of U.S. wishes". On that point at least, recent events in Libya show that she overestimated the EU's desires for independence.

And today, nothing has been solved: Salam Fayyad's approach has come to a dead end, mirroring all the previous attempts to solve the conflict between Israel and Palestine in the framework of the "Two state solution".

Since her book was published, Ms Tilley has been able to clarify her arguments in favour of the "One state solution" in various symposiums and particularly in a pa-

per entitled “A Palestinian Declaration of Independence: Implications for Peace”

The two-state solution impasse

Virginia Tilley wishes to be objective. She observes that the different projects of “two state solution” do not fit in with realities on the ground. Israeli colonization in the West Bank has considerably developed in comparison with the 1990s. The very dense grid of colonization has transformed the West Bank, its infrastructures, its economy and the living conditions of all its inhabitants, Jewish and Arab. It has made the “two state solution” unfeasible. To support this observation, Virginia Tilley quotes President Bush's April 14th 2004 speech “The realities on the ground and in the region have changed greatly over the last several decades and any final settlement must take into account those realities and be agreeable to the parties.”

“Taking into account the realities on the ground and in the region” makes Virginia Tilley's approach original and she does not bind herself to accepting the confined framework of UN sponsored accords, which are far from those realities. These objective conditions have reduced to nil the viability of a Palestinian state de facto, subjected to the state of Israel and totally deprived of the means to exist as an independent state. Ms Tilley concluded that the “one state solution”, excluding any other possibility, has been imposed for practical reasons taking realities into account.

Facing Facts

For Virginia Tilley “Facing Facts” is the primary concern (it is the title of the first chapter) rather than the trusting of the Oslo Accord promises which she calls the

“skilled diplomatic maneuvering by Rabin”.

Does partitioning Palestine afford the “solution” of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? The first plan for partition was mapped out at the UN as early as 1947, with the blessing of the West's major powers, along with Stalin's. But it ignored the will of the Palestinian people opposed to partition. Since 1948, other plans for partition were devised and constantly updated during the Camp David accords (1978), the Madrid Conference (1991), the Oslo Accords (1993 and 1995) and in the various road maps imagined by US presidents – both Republican and Democrat – one after the other over the recent decades.

Virginia Tilley's assessment is starkly clear: the “peace processes” defined subsequently to the Oslo Accords have run into a dead end and the “road maps for peace” have led nowhere.

On the basis of this assessment and of the reality of the country, Ms Tilley considers that any “two state solution” should be abandoned, because such a solution is not viable and does not solve one single cause of the conflict: neither the Golan issue (a Syrian territory annexed by the State of Israel) nor the issue of East Jerusalem (reunified and annexed by the State of Israel), let alone the fundamental issue of the right to return for Palestinian refugees of 1948, and of all those who have been expelled since that date.

The collective myth of an “honest broker”

United Nation Security Council Resolution 446 (March 1979) affirms that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories are “illegal” according to international law

and an “obstacle to reach a just and lasting peace in the Middle East”

Virginia Tilley explains that UN resolutions 242 and 238, accepted by US foreign policies have created “The collective myth of an 'honest broker'”. But she calls attention to the Bush administration's move in 2004 “publicly stamping approval on the « larger » Jewish settlement blocs while unilaterally removing from negotiations the Palestinians’ right of return within Israel”.

It is common knowledge that UN resolutions dealing with Palestinian rights are never implemented. What is the use of those resolutions, except for easing the conscience of the major powers, which Ms Tilley calls a “diplomatic fig leaf”?

Deliberately encouraged by each US administration and the Israeli government one after the other, colonization in the West Bank has been stepped up irrespective of UN resolutions.

Virginia Tilley substantiates her argument that Israeli settlements have always been part and parcel of the prospect of colonization of Palestine which is basic to Zionism. Settlements in the West Bank have always been funded by official agencies such as the Jewish Agency, the World Zionist Organization or ministries- such as the ministry of housing, of industry and commerce, of defense, of transport and education. These agencies have always been associated to, if not fully part of, the Israeli State's administration, ever since it was founded.

Instead of restricting her arguments to these general and widely recognized factors, Virginia Tilley prefers to cite the precise example of the project called “Bloc Rehan” crafted in 1988, whose implementation zone straddled the “Green

Line” pioneering the annexation by Israel of a sizeable portion of the West Bank: “... in 1988 the Jewish Agency reported that the region known to Arabs as Wadi Ara and on Zionist maps as Nahal Eron remains with a sparse Jewish population noting that an area of about 180 square kilometers is inhabited by less than 1,000 Jews amidst an Arab population of 160,000.”

Virginia Tilley gives the details of the financial set-up of the “Bloc Rehan”: “The total projected cost of the Rehan Bloc was US\$7,982,000. The WZO alone, in charge of settlement construction on the West Bank side, was to supply \$2,975,000 of this amount. But because the project straddled the Green Line, each component of the project had to be orchestrated through a strategic collaboration. The Jewish Agency’s legal setup confined its authority to Israel’s side of the Green Line; the WZO would have to supervise settlements on the West Bank side. Other agencies, however, could operate on both sides.”

The project was carried out with the assent of Israeli authorities: a report of the Department in charge of settlements appointed the Israeli government in office at the time the task of funding the “education” chapter to the tune of US \$150,000 out of a total US \$425,000, “the balance to be obtained from the regional settler council, the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Education.”

Besides, Virginia Tilley has provided ample proof that the State of Israel gives support to the settlers in the form of individual loans at ridiculously low rates to acquire housing, to invest in commerce and industry, in transports and job creation, in social and educational structures for children, clinics, sports and cultural centers and so on. In the building of these infra-

structures, housing units and roads, the State of Israel has invested billions of dollars in the West Bank settlements.

Since the end of the 1990s, the West Bank's economy has almost entirely relied on its exchanges with Israel: "In 1999, 97 percent of West Bank exports went to Israel. That statistic does not include the private Israeli investment in Jewish settlements, which includes shopping malls, cinemas, and industry."

The State of Israel has no political will to give up these infrastructures, or even to exchange them for a promise of lasting peace. Ms Tilley notes that when Israel withdrew from Sinai in exchange for peace with Egypt, Ariel Sharon, then Defense Minister, organized the blasting of the Yamit settlement (located on Egyptian territory) rather than see Jewish buildings handed out to Arabs. In the West Bank, blasting Israeli settlements would turn the country into a wasteland and the State of Israel starkly refuses to let Jewish people be administrated by Arab authorities.

Virginia Tilley writes: "Having Jews live in the biblical territory under Palestinian (alien) rule would only return the settlers to the condition of Jewish life under the Romans, the Babylonians, or any of the unreliable, oppressive, and sometimes lethally dangerous alien rulers in Jewish collective memory through two millennia. Such a prospect is viewed with fear and anathema."

Withdrawal from the Gaza Strip has facilitated settlements in the West Bank.

Many observers consider that Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is an encouraging example of what should be done to achieve the "two-state solution". The Israeli withdrawal, announced by

Ariel Sharon as early as 2003, was achieved at the end of 2005, shortly after Ms Tilley's book was published. Here is what she thinks of Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip: "... withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is both politically desirable and feasible for Israel. Sharon is indeed one of those keenly aware that withdrawing from Gaza will in several ways facilitate Israel's hold on the West Bank."

If the Gaza Strip was part of British Mandate Palestine, Virginia Tilley notes that Zionism was never much attracted by this portion of Palestine, as the Gaza Strip did not have the same symbolic value as the West Bank. Contrary to the West Bank, which Zionists call "Judea and Samaria" to link it to the biblical tale of "the legendary kingdoms of David and Solomon", the Gaza Strip was never part of any Judean or Israeli kingdom in the antiquity.

Besides, settlements in the Gaza Strip were small and involved few people. In 2005, the Jewish population established in the Gaza Strip numbered some 7,800 compared with over one million Palestinians. This demographic difference facilitated the transfer of the Jewish population – the Sharon administration however had to resort to force against reluctant settlers.

The territorial basis for a viable Palestinian state no longer exists

In 2005, when Ms Tilley's book was published, the "two state solution" - which was to be the completion of the partition plans formulated as early as 1947 – had already been made unfeasible because of the Israeli settlement grid in the West Bank. As Ms Tilley had foreseen, the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip at the end of 2005, far from ending Israeli settlements in the West Bank only boosted the settling drive. As of 2005, the case of East Jerusalem raised in itself an

array of questions because of the implementation of a special law of annexation of the city to the State of Israel and of the settlement of numerous Israelis in the eastern part of the Old City.

In 2005, Virginia Tilley explained: “At this writing, these territories hold some 230 settlements and some four hundred thousand Jewish settlers (about 10 percent of Israel’s population). Israel has annexed East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights and considers them as part of Eretz Israel (the land of Israel), Israeli sovereign territory....An Israeli withdrawal from the Golan engages the same questions as other regions – questions of ideology, security, and especially water (the Golan’s aquifer is crucial to Israel).”

Since 2005, the situation has simply gone from bad to worse. In 2008, 192,000 Israelis were living in East Jerusalem with an estimated Arab population of 208,000. In 2009, a little less than 500,000 Israeli settlers had settled in the West bank and East Jerusalem. Estimates dated 2012 indicate that the half-million settlers benchmark was overtaken with 310,000 settlers in the West Bank and more than 200,000 Israeli people living in East Jerusalem where 270,000 Arab people still live.

In 2005, Virginia Tilley put forth two arguments showing the “two state solution impasse”: “ The Jewish settlements always recognized by the international community as an « obstacle to peace » have accomplished their purpose : the territorial basis for a viable Palestinian state no longer exists...The two-state option has been eliminated as a practical solution in two senses. First and most graphically, Jewish settlements have carved Palestinian territory into a vestige too small to sustain a viable national society...By the end of the 1990s, however, the settlements were major urban complexes burrowed

deep into Palestinian territory...230,000 settlers were embedded in the region, with jobs, children, social networks and full cultural lives... The second sense in which the two-state solution has died is that even if a Palestinian « state » were declared in this dismembered enclave, it can bring continuing instability. The resulting Palestinian statelet would be blocked off physically from the Israeli economy, its major cities would be cut off from each other, and its government would be unable to control the territory’s water resources, develop its agriculture, or manage its trade with neighboring states. It would comprise little more than a sealed vessel of growing poverty and demoralization.”

This 2005 balance sheet showing “growing poverty and demoralization” is the one which best depicts the situation in the Gaza Strip in 2012.

Reverting to the 1947 borders would be political suicide for Zionism

Virginia Tilley explains the reasons of Israeli leaders' opposition to any reversal to the 1947 borders: “...Menachim Begin asserted that Israel’s withdrawing to the 1967 border would be 'national suicide', Golda Meir denounced such a withdrawal as 'treasonable', and Abba Eban said that the 1967 border carried a 'memory of Auschwitz’”.

Indeed, the “two state solution” would imply that Israel withdraw to the 1967 borderlines but this withdrawal clashes with the bases of Zionism which Ms Tilley coins as ethno-nationalism.

Ms Tilley notes that no court of the State of Israel ever agreed to recognize the existence of “Israeli nationality”: according to the law, the State of Israel only recognizes “Jewish” citizens who enjoy special rights

(concerning landed property, housing and education subsidies) or “Arab” and “non-Jewish” (enjoying none of those rights). Blurring the lines between “belonging to a nation” and “belonging to a religion”, Zionism is founded on the supposed existence of a “Jewish nation”; the other nations are to recognize the right of this “Jewish nation” to have a “Jewish state”. Besides, this basic feature of Zionism accounts for the aggressive aspect of debates on upholding the “Jewish character” of the State of Israel which considers itself “necessary as a vital sanctuary for the Jews in a world devastated by anti-Semitism.”

Ms Tilley asks: “If the two-state option is permanently crippled by the settlement grid, how can the conflict be resolved and the Middle East stabilized? The solution lies elsewhere...”

Again, she quotes G. Bush's April 14th 2004 speech: “The United States is strongly committed and I am strongly committed to the security of Israel as a vibrant Jewish state.”

And she concludes: “This phrasing reflected the writers’ better understanding that is precisely the Jewishness of the Jewish state that is now on the table. For if a Jewish settlement in the West Bank has already expanded too far, then a Palestinian state is no longer viable, and the two-state solution promises only gathering crisis and possible explosion. And if the only alternative to that explosion is the one-state solution, then Zionism itself is approaching a crisis.”

Ms Tilley devotes part of her book to the internecine rifts that have torn at the fabric of Zionism, “a heterodox movement woven with disparate threads” since it came into being. First she notes a “growing polarization” of Zionism pitting

the liberal-secularists against the religious-nationalists, sometimes called “neo-zionists” who, she says, “urge the settlements’ expansion toward a theocratic, territorially maximalist, and ethnically exclusive vision of Israel”. And some extremists, whose uncompromising positions forbid any peaceful solution whatever, advocate mass expulsion of all the Palestinians from the West Bank. The power of the latter is spreading not only to circles of the Israeli government but especially under the form of powerful lobby with the US ruling elites. Ms Tilley insists on the fact that it is a Zionist lobby and not a “Jewish lobby”, many Jewish intellectuals like Noam Chomsky being opposed to Zionism and the Zionist lobby on its side being led by “Christian Zionists” connected to televangelists such as Pat Robertson and the ultra-conservative network of Fox-News.

In her analysis of the political agenda of the US “neo-conservatives” who support Israeli settlements, Virginia Tilley quotes an astonishingly relevant report, written by a Oded Yinon, published in 1982 by the World Zionist Organization. The report “explicitly endorsed Arab-state fragmentation or « dissolution » as Israel’s modus operandi”:

“Lebanon’s total dissolution into five provinces serves as a precedent for the entire Arab world, including Egypt, Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, and is already following this track. The dissolution of Syria and Iraq later on into ethnically or religiously unique areas, such as Lebanon, is Israel’s primary target on the Eastern front in the long run, while the dissolution of the military power of those states serves as the primary short term target. Syria will fall apart, in accordance with its ethnic and religious structure, into several states such as in present-day Lebanon...This state of affairs will be the

guarantee for peace and security in the area in the long run, and that aim is already within our reach today.”

The quote continues: “Iraq, rich in oil on the one hand and internally torn on the other, is guaranteed as a candidate for Israel’s targets. Its dissolution is even more important for us than that of Syria. Iraq is stronger than Syria. In the short run it is Iraqi power which constitutes the greatest threat to Israel. Every kind of inter-Arab confrontation will assist us in the short run and will shorten the way to the more important aim of breaking up Iraq into denominations as in Syria and in Lebanon. In Iraq, a division into provinces along ethnic / religious lines as in Syria during Ottoman times is possible. So three (or more) states will exist around the three major cities : Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, and Shiite areas in the south will separate from the Sunni and Kurdish north.”

The threats towards the fragmentation of Arab States were therefore clearly defined as early as 1982.

Virginia Tilley concludes her book on two important points.

She pays homage to the forerunners of the “One state solution”, the Ihud (Union) group formed in 1942 around Judah Magnes and Martin Buber. Moreover, as an appendix, she publishes the platform of Ihud which explains it “adheres to the Zionist movement insofar as this seeks the establishment of the Jewish National Home for the Jewish People in Palestine”, but “regards a Union between the Jewish and Arab peoples as essential to the up building of Palestine and of cooperation between the Jewish world and the Arab world in all branches of life.”

The founders of Ihud, opposed to the creation of a “Jewish State” excluding Arabs, the content of the “National Home” in the

framework of close collaboration with the Arabs. If the platform of Ihud, always obscured by official Zionism, is so important, it is because it situates the current debate around a one state Palestine as the continuation of the democratic traditions of the West Jews among whom Judah Magnes, who, as early as 1917, had been active alongside socialist Eugene V. Debs against the USA's entering the war and to support the Soviet revolution, had been one of the major figures.

At the end of her book, Ms Tilley lists the 9 points which she thinks could precondition the formation of a single state over the entire territory of Palestine, guaranteeing every citizen equal rights:

- Sustain the Law of Return for Jews, reflecting the special historical relationship of Jews and confirming Israel as a sanctuary.
- Detach any additional privileges (automatic citizenship and housing benefits) from the Law of Return. Revise the Citizenship Law to include ethnic-neutral criteria for naturalization.
- Curtail the activities of the WZO and the Jewish Agency while sustaining their activities supporting Jewish Diaspora life.
- Establish some parity principle for Palestinian return. Second and third generation Palestinians not born in the territory should be held to the same naturalization criteria applied to prospective immigrant Jews.
- Eliminate and prohibit all ethnic provisions regarding land tenure, allowing Arabs and all non-Jews full access to the state’s land.
- Abolish ethnic differences regarding military service, educational, health, or housing benefits.
- Transfer public authority over planning and development to non-Jewish-national state agencies. Restrict the do-

mestic activities of the Jewish Agency to managing and promoting Jewish ethnic and religious matters, such as promoting cultural events and managing libraries and historical projects.

- Insure free access by all citizens and foreign pilgrims to holy sites.

Eliminate all national identities except the state identity as a status recognized under state law. Through the usual modes of iconography, new text-books and schooling, affirm and inculcate a sense of dignity and vision of the state identity as a cohesive multiethnic national identity.

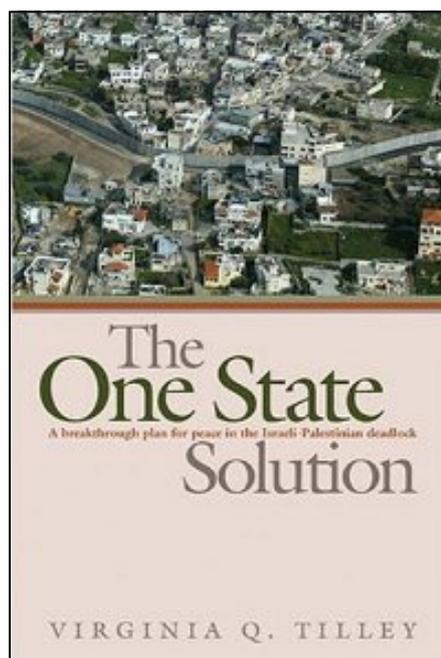
This is a praiseworthy effort and she of course is aware of the obstacles to be overcome:

“Fixed at a sensitive nerve centre of the Middle-East – the “holy land” of three religions- the Zionist project of Jewish statehood has culminated in a powder keg for international security and a course of doom for Israel...Yet voices are raised to

avert that disaster...”

Virginia Tilley considers hers is one of the voices which are being raised to prevent the powder keg from exploding.

1. An article published in May 2006 based on an intervention delivered to the NGO “*Avocats Sans Frontières*” (Defense counsels without borders) (December 2005)
2. Admitting Palestine to become a UNESCO member state resulted in the suspension of several dozen million dollar contribution that the USA was to pay to the Organization. The State of Israel also suspended its own contribution to UNESCO, froze dozens of million dollars of funds that should have been transferred to Palestine and started the process of cancelling its UNESCO membership. The Israeli government also decided to step up the settlement process by building 1,650 additional housing units in East Jerusalem plus another 350 housing units in the West Bank.



A One-State Solution for Israel and Palestine

by Georges Bisharat (April, 10, 2012)

The international community has struggled for two decades to navigate Israelis and Palestinians toward an oasis of peace and stability. Yet it is increasingly clear that this oasis -- the two-state solution, whereby each of the two peoples would exercise sovereignty within their own state -- is in fact a mirage that continually recedes into the distance, always remaining just beyond reach.

In fact, a genuinely sovereign Palestinian state will not be realized any time in the foreseeable future, and quite likely never will be. The obstacles to meaningful Palestinian statehood are constantly mounting, most tangibly in the form of Israel's illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Some 600,000 Jewish settlers now reside there -- three times as many as at the beginning of the Oslo peace process in 1993, and their numbers are growing rapidly.

Continuing to chase the two-state mirage under these circumstances will only enable continuing Israeli colonization of the West Bank and entrench a new form of systematic ethno-religious discrimination, where only Jews enjoy full rights -- to travel, housing, employment, education, and other basics of a free life.

As it stands, there is one effective sovereign between the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and the Jordan River to the east: Israel. It is the Israeli government whose actions most impact the lives not only of its 7.6 million citizens, but also of its 4.3 million subjects in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. As this functionally unitary state will not be divided, the question that looms is: on what principles will it be organized, ethnic privilege for Jews, as it is now, or equal rights? Ethnic privilege for Jews is currently institutionalized not only in the

segregated Jewish communities Israel has established in the West Bank, but also in more than 35 laws within Israel that bestow benefits exclusively to its Jewish citizens.

A growing number of forward-looking Palestinians and Israelis are rejecting Jewish ethnic privilege as both ethically insupportable and politically unsustainable, and are opting for equal rights. That is the position of a number of the participants in a "one state" conference held recently at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School. Recognizing that Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs are destined to live together, the conference participants were seeking ways to share power equitably between the two communities.

Not all support for a single state emanates from progressive thinkers, however. Members of Israel's right wing are also beginning to seriously mull the advantages of a single state: no borders would have to be drawn, Jerusalem would remain undivided, and Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank -- at least if desegregated -- could remain where they are. Current Knesset speaker Reuven Rivlin, for example, stated in a 2010 interview in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz: "I would rather Palestinians as citizens of this country over dividing the land up." He further advocated "true partnership" between Jews and Palestinians and relations based on mutual respect and absolute equality.

Right-wing politicians in the United States appear to be following suit. Former Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum, in a recent exchange with a young voter captured on YouTube.com, characterized the West Bank as "Israeli country" and asserted that "All the people that live in the West Bank are

Israelis, they're not Palestinians. There is no 'Palestinian.'" As a descriptive matter, of course, he was flatly wrong -- Palestinian residents of the West Bank are not citizens of Israel and have no vote in Israeli elections. But as a normative statement, Santorum's could be read as endorsing the inclusion of Palestinians into the Israeli body politic.

In February the Republican National Committee passed a resolution sponsored by national committeewoman Cindy Costa of South Carolina that claimed "peace can be afforded the region only through a united Israel governed under one law for all people." Elsewhere the resolution denied that Israel was "an occupier of the land of others," clarifying that the area to be governed under "one law" includes the West Bank. Two state legislatures, in South Carolina and Florida, have passed resolutions in the last year supporting a one-state solution and identifying the West Bank as part of Israel.

By abandoning the still-born two-state

solution, the emerging Israeli and American conservative advocates of one-state achieve a form of progress. But real, on-the-ground progress will follow only if the state that ultimately emerges is solidly based on the principle of equal rights. Inequality, in contrast, is a formula for perpetual conflict.

It pays to remember that possibly the largest, and surely the safest and most prosperous Jewish community in the world, is in the United States. We abandoned racial privilege and formally committed ourselves to equal rights in adopting the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868. Is a true democracy -- one in which all, not some, enjoy full rights of citizenship -- really so threatening to the interests of Israeli Jews? Would not a truly democratic state joining Jews and Palestinians become the "light unto nations" that Israel was always meant to be?

George Bisharat is Professor, at UC Hastings College of the Law. First publication in the Huffington Post. Published in Dialogue with the author permission.

Book review : A Common State between the River Jordan and the Sea, by Eric Hazan and Eyal Sivan

by François Lazar (May 30, 2012)

The book “A Common State between the River Jordan and the Sea”, co-written by Eric Hazan and Eyal Sivan, published by La Fabrique (in French only), is yet another contribution to the necessary critical discussion on the future of the State of Israel and Palestine. The two authors, one a writer and the other an Israeli filmmaker, have long been known for their serious and highly relevant work. Eric Hazan, the director of La Fabrique publishers, introduced French readers to fundamental critical works on Zionism, the authors of which (the names Norman Finkelstein, Amira Hass, Tanya Reinhart, Joseph Massad, Ilan Pappé and Edward Said come to mind), might not have been translated into French otherwise.

The book is concise, controversial and accompanied by a documentary film by Eyal Sivan entitled “A Common State – a Potential Conversation”. The work can but retain our attention, as much for the arguments it presents as for the serious issues posed by some of those arguments, which we will examine.

The Palestinian question, and more particularly its outcome, is the subject of a debate that is older than the proclamation of the State of Israel itself on May 14, 1948, which had been preceded several months earlier by the vote on the partitioning of Palestine by the General Assembly of the United Nations (November 17, 1947). The work briefly summarizes the conditions of the creation of the State of Israel.

The title of the first chapter, “Sharing instead of Partitioning” takes us into a semantic debate on words and their meaning. The authors defend the idea of sharing, arguing that the term defines a placing in common, contrary to the principal of partitioning which, according to

them designates a cutting, a division. The definition given for “to share” in dictionaries, however, is not so categorical. Among different definitions for “share” can be found “to make a share; to share a field (= dividing up, splitting up) of a country by its invaders (= breaking up); the sharing of booty, of stolen money” Elsewhere in the dictionary, the term “partition” is defined as : “the sharing of a country, of land or of territory (=the partitioning of Cyprus)” Why should two terms that can be considered as synonyms be presented as being contrary/different? It is true that Palestinian activists often use the word “sharing”. Need the ambiguity be emphasized, or should it be left as is? The struggle for political freedom here has been a fight for the unification of rights, of assembly, of the reunification of the territories. Isn’t fighting against the partitioning - which is at the origin of all the ills that the populations living on the historical territory of Palestine are up against today, beginning with the Palestinian people themselves – in fact the same as demanding reunification (implying the re-unification of families) rather than a sharing? This question will be the subject of a discussion at the end of the book; we shall come back to it.

The two authors then remind us, in detail, of the declarations that have been made by so many (from Netanyahu to Sharon, including the Zionist pacifist Uri Avneri and the leaders of Hamas and of the Palestinian Authority), claiming that the creation of a Palestinian State would be a necessity for there to be a common future for “two free peoples”. Going back over the history of this demand, Hazan and Sivan ask the predictable question: “How can a consensus that is so general not come to be realized?” The succession of dozens of “peace plans” has indeed come to nothing, except the

steady worsening of the precariousness of the existence for the Palestinians, and the strengthening of the Israeli control over Palestinian land. In that sense, can we still today speak of “partitioning”, given the fact that the Israeli control is total? When they assert “the two-State discourse, while convenient, cannot and will never lead to a real solution because (...) the partitioning of Palestine is simply not possible” the two authors state the obvious. Let us pause to consider an odd evaluation. Eric Hazan and Eyal Sivan consider that “the partitioning (...) is not a solution but discourse. It is war-like discourse...” Discourse? Yet Eric Hazan, the impassioned author of *Notes sur l’occupation*, knows the raw, physical reality, expressed in the flesh of a whole people, of the consequences of separation/segregation. It is no a democratic solution, but it is **the** solution that the Zionists have come up with to attempt to eradicate the entire Palestinian presence. We have got a deep divide in Palestine, and the reality of the Zionists, their solution – which endeavours towards a terrible impasse – is for a Palestine without Palestinians.

In clarifying their point of view on the inanity of partition, Hazan and Sivan develop the idea that can be found in many authors treating the question. “Therefore, a single State does exist on the historical land of Palestine. What is called “occupied territory” is actually a region of this State where military law rules over a majority of the (non-Jewish) population. This single State is not a common State because it defines itself as a Jewish State and not the State of all its citizens. It maintains the inequality and legal discrimination not only in the zones that it calls “occupied territories” but also over all the non-Jews inhabiting the country. This situation cannot be resolved by partitioning. The realistic solu-

tion is to change the present single State into a State common to all these citizens, free and equal before the law.” Pursuing, the authors note, through practical examples that separation and partitioning founded on “ethnic” and religious criteria are tantamount to arbitrary racism (although this term is not used to describe Zionism).

In whose interest is it to maintain the myth of two States?

The second chapter poses an essential question: In whose interest is it to maintain the myth of two States? The authors answer that there is a pragmatic, practical interest for the State of Israel to maintain a situation of temporary status quo where “the discourse on the creation of a Palestinian State makes the military occupation, and thus the status of war, acceptable, which is a social and national cement indispensable to the cohesion of the Jewish State”. Note the use of the expression “Jewish State” without inverted commas, as if it were a recognized fact. Many authors (Arno J. Mayer, Baruch Kimmerling, Ilan Pappé, etc.) have written on the incredibly large place occupied by the army in the Israeli society, noting, “the Israeli military establishment is barely subject to civilian control”(Arno J. Mayer). It should be emphasized here that what greatly dominates the leading circles of the Hebrew State is the Zionist ideology that is called “revisionist” – but which is actually but the logical evolution of Zionism.

After the State of Israel itself, the other party that “also has an interest in maintaining the idea of two States” is the Palestinian Authority. Can we consider – as do the authors – that the Oslo Agreement was “supposed to be the beginning of the path to a Palestinian State”? That agree-

ment wrought the carving up of the West Bank into three zones of which one, essentially populated by Palestinians, saw the Israeli occupation forces replaced by Palestinian police – working on behalf of the Israelis. For the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, published by La Fabrique, “the Oslo Accords were nothing more than a political and military arrangement meant to replace the Israeli occupation by another form of control”. In 1991 – 1993, the two State idea, which would be further developed by George W. Bush’s Road Map in 2004, was not yet officially on the agenda and the Oslo Agreement does not refer to it. Shimon Peres, in the last decade, often recalled that neither he himself, as one of the negotiator’s of the accords, nor then-Prime Minister Rabin had committed to a possible Palestinian State. What was important then for the proponents of world order was to stop the first Intifada (which began in September 1987) and its popular committees. That said, the facts put together by Hazan and Sivan call up an undeniable consequence: “For the Palestinian Authority, the myth of two States is (...) financial manna.”

The book then expands on the interest that the western countries have in maintaining the “two-State myth”. First at stake is the issue of relations with the Arab and Muslim countries. The two authors note “in the countries where there is a significant Arab minority, open support for the creation of a Palestinian State plays a role in the keeping of domestic peace”. Would it not especially be a question of creating and maintaining a communitarianist division in order to “ghetto-ize”, to prevent the junction between all the components of a same social class... precisely on the Israeli model? That is something that need be discussed. The third element, “the two-State discourse allows for the supporting

of Israel as a country attached to peace in the region...” Coming back to the idea that the Israelis share “western values”, Hazan and Sivan use a quotation from Netanyahu, speaking before the president of the European Parliament, to great effect: “We are at the extreme point of European and western values, all the way to the Himalayan mountains. We are you!” Just what these “western values” are – values that are thus opposed to the universal value of equality of rights – remains to be defined.

Chapter 3 then, logically, goes on to define what a State is. We will quickly see that the State proposed for the Palestinians is not a State like the others. For example, it “would only regroup one-third of the Palestinian people; the other two-thirds remain outside...” From a territorial point of view, Eric Hazan and Eyal Sivan remind us that the negotiations only concern the 22% of historical Palestine occupied by the State of Israel since 1967. The authors specify that the Israeli colonies set up in the West Bank have already gnawed away 46% of the previously defined 22%. Furthermore, “the West Bank has been divided into three cantons, themselves also split up”. (“Three cantons”; we shall come back on this later.) All the descriptions of the West Bank, be they from the Zionists or their critics, show a territory integrated, used and in fact annexed, which the book tasks to demonstrate in the following pages. Finally, a State – even at the head of a string of territories – would be nothing without armed forces and the better part of the attributes of sovereignty... To conclude this chapter, Hazan and Sivan correctly point out that “an ersatz Palestinian State is possible and it is even probable that such will come about”. But even with all the gold in the world, even with the backing of the UN General Assembly, without the implementing of the

right of return for the refugees – impracticable in the micro-State – such a constitution could not be made without the support of the broadest masses of the Palestinians. Everyone knows this. So, once again, there remains the option of repression.

The next chapter deals with the “long term” viability of a “Jewish State”, holding such a perspective as improbable, due to the extreme diversity of the populations living in this territory. The Jewish populations, whose culture, rites and traditions are very different, are only held together by “the existence of a common enemy”. The authors insist on this point: “the state of war is the guarantor of national cohesion in Israel” and, it should be added, of the economic prosperity that is a product of the security and weapons industries. It would moreover be more correct, according to us, to define the State of Israel negatively as a “non-Arab” State, founded notably on the discrimination against and the rejection of the Palestinian people, of which only a small fraction escaped the massive expulsions of 1948. The historian Benny Morris, known worldwide for having been the first – amongst the Israelis – to prove the existence of the massacres of 1948 – stated in the January 8, 2004 issue of *Haaretz* (corroborating that reality), “In certain conditions, expulsion is not a war crime. I don’t think that the expulsions of 1948 were war crimes. You can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs. You have to dirty your hands. (...)If he (Ben-Gurion) was already engaged in expulsion, maybe he should have done a complete job. I know that this stuns the Arabs and the liberals and the politically correct types. But my feeling is that this place would be quieter and know less suffering if the matter had been resolved once and for all. If Ben-Gurion had carried out a large expulsion

and cleansed the whole country – the whole Land of Israel, as far as the Jordan River. It may yet turn out that this was his fatal mistake. If he had carried out a full expulsion – rather than a partial one – he would have stabilized the State of Israel for generations”. Does this definition of the State of Israel need commenting?

In presenting the great diversity of its populations, Hazan and Sivan more than once characterize the Palestinians of the inside as “Arabs or Israeli Palestinians”, noting further on in arguments that are controversial “their national belonging is of the Arab nation”. There is not the least commentary on that expression, which allows for accepting that if there is an “Arab nation” then there can be a “Jewish nation”, whereas the arguments developed previously demonstrate the contrary. So here we see the progressive acceptance of the idea that the common State under discussion would be binational, i.e. founded on an ethnic recognition, based on the origins of each, the psychological problems of the other – and not on the equality of rights. Given the partition, given Zionist ideology, given the daily practice of Zionism in Palestine, how can the State of Israel not be defined as being colonial racist, gorged with powerful economic interests, which our authors – and it is indeed their right – do not do? A last element on the diversity of Israel: “in the army, half of the officers are religious and of colonial origin, and the proportion is even higher amongst the commandos and the combat units (...) for them, the enemy is the Palestinian”. “The Jewish State” – without the inverted commas has recently taken a content rarely evoked, through the voice of the former head of Israel secret services, Yval Diskin: explaining that he has “no confidence in either the Prime Minister or the Defence Minister”, he

specified “I give no credence to leaders who base their decisions on messianic sentiments”. We shall leave Diskin to manage his own contradictions, and come back to the book. In this chapter, Sivan and Hazan emphasize the impossibility of an enduring “Jewish State”, all the while considering it could “remain in force for the middle term”. Thus today there is indeed a “Jewish State”? Doesn’t saying that make the authoritative amalgamation between Judaism and Zionism and recognize a “national” legitimacy of that State? The “Jewish State” is but a denomination usurped by the State of Israel, an artificial construction that has used the suffering of the European Jewish populations surviving the Nazi terror to respond to the convergent interests of American imperialism and Stalinist bureaucracy, carried by Zionism.

The two next chapters, entitled “The arguments against the common State: truth and fiction” and “The idea of a common State was not pulled out of a hat” exhaustively review the arguments developed by those who oppose an end to partitioning. (Again, the idea that in reality there has been no partitioning since 1967 should be developed). Hazan and Sivan dismiss out of hand that “the term destruction, which obviously refers to the destruction of Jews in Europe, is to be eliminated as it implicitly establishes a lumping together of the Jewish State and the Jews”. The assertion of the right of return is itself frequently taxed with being anti-Semitic. Need it then necessarily be withdrawn? Can there be a solution to the problem of the refugees in the framework of the State of Israel? And what is it that is shocking in the challenging of the institutions of that State? There is a shameful lumping together of the Jewish people and the Zionist State. We know – heavily, oppressively, threateningly – that any criticism of Israeli

policy may be called anti-Semitism – in short, Nazism! Must this intellectual diktat really be accepted? How does the destruction of reactionary and racist institutions mean the destruction of populations who live in this country? The destruction of the Salazar State in Portugal and the combat to destroy the Apartheid State in South Africa do not mean the destruction of the populations. As much as it is admitted that this amalgamating in the State of Israel is oppressive, can’t we admit to what extent the destruction of such institutions would be a liberation for the Jewish populations of the whole world, prisoners that they are of this yoke – both physical and intellectual – that has turned the victims of yesterday into the guarantors, in spite of themselves, of the oppressors?

Hazan and Sivan beat around this question and yet manage to carefully avoid it. Page 38 of the book marks the place where our disagreement is fundamental, particularly with the assertion: “the end of Jewish State sovereignty (...) does not in the least imply the end of the Judeo-Israeli civilization, an undisputable reality which was built all throughout the 20th century”. The surprised reader will find here no definition of that “Judeo-Israeli civilization” and even less a demonstration that it is an “undisputable reality”. How to describe this “civilization”, which has not even led to the creation of a culture all its own? Again, this is the underlying idea of the book coming back in the front door; here, the term “State” is no longer in vogue, there it is the word “nation” (we will come back to that) and yet again, “long live civilization”! The State of Israel is impregnated with American culture, ideology of western origin and... eastern food. A recent Israeli film, “Policeman” by Nadav Lapid is a bleak illustration of the dead-end that a society that is supposed to be civilized

has come to. The first scene of the movie shows a group of Israeli policemen, mountain-biking up a hill in the West Bank and stopping to overlook a magnificent view of the Dead Sea. One of them exclaims: “We really do have the most beautiful country in the world”. The last scene is a young Jewish Israeli lying on the ground, shot in the head by a policeman who is standing looking down on her. You can see on-coming death in the fear in her eyes. A young woman who was lost and floundering, she had committed a “terrorist” act against a group of Israeli businessmen. She symbolizes the complete dead-end of a society without hope, without a future... in “the most beautiful country in the world”

“confusing right of return and return.”

On another point of disagreement, the next paragraph brings up a “second ambiguity”, that of “confusing right of return and return.” Here we are. Hazan and Sivan specify: “Recognition the right of return does not mean the physical return of all the refugees, but recognition of the wrong suffered in 1948, acceptance of Zionism’s responsibility in the Palestinian exodus (...)”. Let us stop there. Who said that recognition of the right of return does not mean return? Not the 4,000,000 refugees who have been living in camps for two or three generations. The text goes on: “(...) For sixty years, a great part of the Palestinians live outside the country: for them, the right of return is important but it does not mean that all of them wish to go back (...)”. The right of return is “important”? Isn’t it the basic element, the crucible of the national Palestinian movement that has always been the fundamental movement organized by the refugees who wish to go home? If they don’t want to go back, as proclaim

their self-designated spokespersons, what do they want? To become Jordanians, to become Lebanese, to become Syrians? And the 700,000 refugees living in the West Bank, and the million refugees living in the Gaza Strip, what do they want? Concluding this paragraph, the authors specify, to follow up that previous quotation: “– no more than the law of return for the Jewish made all the Jews of the diaspora come back to Israel.” Is that supposed to be second-degree? How can anyone claim to defend the democratic rights of the Palestinian people and make an equal comparison between the refugees “right of return” and the Jewish “right of return” which was simply invented by Zionism in contrast with the historical movement of the Jewish people throughout the world seeking to benefit from the same rights as the populations of the countries where they are living? Demanding the right of return of the Palestinians is a profoundly national and democratic demand. The “right of return” of the Jewish people is a product of colonialism. Go tell the American Jewish that they are refugees. So, Palestinian refugees who demand their right of return would be the problem. Like haunting ghosts, they prevent peace and tranquillity to the State of Israel, who asks for nothing more.

Eric Hazan and Eyal Sivan have broadly demonstrated that there already exist, in all the aspects of day-to-day life, – in a more or less in embryotic form– the elements of a future society founded on the equality of rights. But the book is hard reading, given that, as we mentioned earlier the quality critical analysis keeps coming up against questionable affirmations and dubious shortcuts. Thus it is asserted “it was the policy of separation established by the Oslo Accords that turned the Israelis into settlers and soldiers, in the eyes of a part of the Palestin-

ian youth". The policy of separation was not established by the Oslo Agreement but voted by the Assembly General of the UN in 1947! And we could go all the way back to the Balfour Declaration on this point. The Israelis, and the Zionist before them, have been settlers, not since 1967 but since the foundation of the Hebrew State. And what is to be said of the First Intifada? Wasn't its breaking out in September of 1987 **already** triggered by the settlement policy? Later on, the authors refer to the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, claiming, "the presence of a national liberation army, using Lebanon as the base of resistance against Israel, destabilized the country (...)". There were no massive worker strikes in Lebanon in 1975, no provocation from Christian Fascist militia backed by France? Palestinian organizations took up the cause of the Lebanese working class and they were punished for it. They were pro-western militia and Syria who intervened militarily at the joint request of the USSR and the USA, who destabilized Lebanon (unless a counter-revolutionary action can be considered as re-establishing stability)! The authors then speak of "separating religion and politics once and for all", but the term "secular" is never mentioned. The chapter finishes with quotations from Zionist leaders aware of the narrow link between maintaining the perspective of a two-State solution and the very existence of the State of Israel.

The book comes back on the history of a demand for a single State. The long quote from Lord Montagu, Jewish and British like the other British, at one time Secretary of State to India, is to be appreciated. After the Balfour Declaration, characterizing the Zionist project as a "mischievous political creed", he notably stated "I do not know what (a national home for the Jewish people) involves,

but I assume that it means that Mohammedans and Christians are to make way for the Jews (...) that Jews will hereafter be treated as foreigners in every country but Palestine ... and that Palestine will become the world's ghetto. Let us appreciate the clairvoyance of a Montagu, British and member of the cabinet. Quoting the Brit Shalom association, which defends the idea of a bi-national State, our authors note "Brit Shalom can be said to be Zionist to the extent that it recognizes the existence of a Jewish national identity". Quite correct. What is to be said of those who recognize a "Judeo-Israeli civilization"? Let us also note the declaration of the American Jewish Council, published in the New York Times of August 31, 1943 "(...) We would like the establishing of a democratic and autonomous government in Palestine, where the Jewish, Muslims and Christians are equally represented; where each person may enjoy equal rights and share equal responsibilities, where our Jewish brothers are free Palestinians whose religion is Judaism, the same as we Americans have Judaism as religion". Describing the Jews of Palestine as Palestinians who are Jewish is interesting. We are far from Zionist exclusivity.

A critical analysis of this part would necessitate yet another article. What separates the Jews and the Arabs is not an acid-filled Grand Canyon. Rather it is something political and heavily ideological. Resolving the conflict would mean recognition of the fact that there are expropriators on one side and the expropriated on the other. Furthermore, as the Palestinian militant Ghassan Kanafani said, the roads to the liberation of Palestinian passes through Cairo and Bagdad, Damascus, Amman, Ryad and, let us add, Washington. The "Israeli-Palestinian" conflict is not "local" because the State of Israel's taking hostage

of those who claim to follow Judaism – as we have seen – is but an instrument of the American Middle East policy... even if this instrument may act in accordance with its own logics of survival. The authors take the time to unravel the historical position of the PLO, demanding a secular and democratic State and they consider that “the weak point of this proposition is the considering of the citizens of that State on a religious basis” and that renders the “Palestinian proposition inaudible, internationally and particularly for the Israelis”. That is a curious truncating of the argument. The Palestinian position defends a secular Palestine in which all its components – qualified against their own will as being religious – would have the same rights. Secularity implies that the religious sphere be relegated to the private domain. From this point of view, secularity is a step forward in the political and social emancipation of the populations who demand it. Relegating religion to the private sphere tends among other things to stand in the way of the established order or to seek a new balance of power with that established order. Is that what would render this proposition “internationally inaudible” – i.e. to the ears of the proponents of world order? The official Palestinian position will evolve, but the foundations are still there. The authors discuss about the correct language: Two-State? Single-State? For them, taking Edward Said as the moral authority, it is therefore the notion of sharing that is essential. Further on, they propose “putting aside the idea of “nation” which has done harm enough – and moreover we could say the same for “State” and speak instead of a “common country”. The above quote does not allow for making a distinction between an oppressed, colonized nation and a nation that oppresses. Furthermore, need it be reminded that the current period in the

Middle East has been marked by the American plan for the Greater Middle East, one of the tools for which includes the destruction, breaking up and partitioning of nations (as witnessed in Iraq, Sudan, the Sahel and the projects for Syria). In the same sentence, the authors suggest replacing “State” with “country”. Would that be a country without a State? Functioning perhaps on the principle of subsidiarity? In the same vein, Eric Hazan and Eyal Sivan mention what is called the Olga Appeal, co-written with Michel Warshawski in June 2004. This appeal states, on one hand, “The recognition of the right of return follows from our principles”. Very well – unless it is, as we saw earlier, the right of return without real return. Several lines further, the same document reads: “Is it necessary to know at this stage what the physical form of the future shared existence will be - Two States or not? Perhaps a confederation, perhaps a federation? What about the canton solution?” Without questioning the sincerity of most of the Jewish Israeli endorsers of the Olga Appeal, it only mentions solutions that involve the maintaining of the partitioning: two States, as we have said; a confederation still implying the sovereignty of each of its parties; a federation also implying two state-like entities. As for the canton solution, that conjures up the present reality in the West Bank, it conjures up ex-Yugoslavia torn to pieces by civil war and it, too, results from the recognition of several States. Here is the Olga Appeal bringing us up-to-date: progress or another velvet-lined trap? As Eric Hazan and Eyal Sivan remind us, the debate on the solutions and the definition of the State that will end the partitioning of Palestine has never been so rich, so complex and so necessary... and also so – voluntarily? – blurred.

We come to the conclusion of the book,

contained in seven “theses on the common State”. They summarize the essential demonstration made by the authors, establishing an insurmountable fact: the profound unity of a land, the interweaving of the populations living there. The “denying of that reality will lead to the long-term ruin of any project, no matter how powerful those supporting it”. The second thesis of the book returns to the recommendations of the Olga Appeal, presenting four possible choices for the “mode of political organization of the common State, be it bi-national, federated, cantonal or confederated”. In this referendum, there is no box for a single, democratic, secular State, the choice which “is to be made by the people of that State”, as the authors specify. It is thus a limited choice. In their 4th thesis, Eric Hazan and Eyal Sivan recommend common efforts, as the common State would imply that “the Palestinian Arabs and the Jewish Israelis (how far we are from the American Jewish Council declaration of 1943! – ed.) abandon the tired old dream of a Nation-State”. Tired old dream? Are the authors speaking for themselves? Wouldn’t the common State imply a common fight for a same State, a same nation in which all the components would have the same rights? Anyone is free to describe a historical process as “a tired old dream”. Further on, the mention of this common fight makes a direct reference to the necessity of an organization comparable to the South-African ANC “where Jews, Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians will fight together in equality”. There were few whites in the South African ANC, but that is not the question. The equality we are talking about here is still that same legal equality that, formally, exists in South Africa today, where the blacks – whose poverty has not ceased to increase over the Past 20 years – now have the right to use the same beaches as the whites – who hold

the economic reins of the country. We are also far from Ilan Pappé, who concluded his book entitled “A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples” as follows: “For any political peace initiative to succeed, the chapter of Palestine’s dispossession needs to be closed. Recognizing the very act of dispossession – by accepting in principle the Palestinian refugees’ right of return – could be the crucial act that opens the gate to the road out of the conflict. A direct dialogue between the dispossessed and the state that expelled them can refresh the discourse of peace and may lead people and leaderships alike to acknowledge the need to seek a united political structure which, at different historical junctures in this story, has seemed possible.”

Thesis number 6 will reassure the liberal democrats: “The common State is not meant to resolve all the issues of society, or in particular to put an end to class struggle”. In this State, founded on the recognition of a « Judeo-Israeli civilization » legal equality will thus be engraved above the entrances to public buildings. The common State thus presented will have settled the question of the right of return – which, may we emphasize, is not mentioned in the theses – in each of the countries where the Palestinians of the Diaspora are currently living! The demand for the equality of rights is limited to the legal realm if it is not associated with the demand for the right of return, which carries in itself the question of the expropriation of the expropriators. The “Class struggle” will therefore go on. But how is the class struggle on the historical territory of Palestine described? The political upheaval that will lead to the reunification of Palestine and the establishing of equal rights will be nothing but an expression of an international class struggle, beginning with that which will develop in the

United States itself. Moreover, the exploited Israelis are not exploited in the same conditions as the Palestinians, because they benefit from the profits and advantages of the colonization and the pillage of Palestine. Has the essential framework of the exploitation and the oppression of one class by another nothing to do with the partitioning itself? A common State poses the question of the ownership of the land. In this framework, doesn't the division of the class struggle pit the partisans of partitioning, in other words, the destruction of the Palestinian nation, against the partisans of reunification?

The last sentence of Eric Hazan and Eyal Sivan's book is a quotation from Karl Marx's "The Jewish Question": "political emancipation is only the first step on the road to human emancipation". Reading what came previously, the human emancipation of the Palestinians would be to recognize their having the equivalent rights of their oppressors. Quoting Marx is indeed useful, but it is necessarily to quote in the full. In his book, Marx develops the conditions for the achieving of human emancipation, considering that political emancipation is a condition for that and that it is the transition of religion into the realm of private

law that marks the completion of political emancipation. In the case of the State of Israel, that would mean cantoning religion to the private sphere, i.e. creating a secular State, the incontrovertible prior necessity for any form of social emancipation. Marx emphasizes the point: "Political emancipation certainly represents a great progress. It is not, indeed, the final form of human emancipation, but it is the final form of human emancipation within the framework of the prevailing social order. It goes without saying that we are speaking here of real, practical emancipation." This practical point of view necessarily means the affirming of the present-day right of return and the creation of a single secular and democratic State in which all its components - Arabic, Jewish, Christian - will have the same rights.

An expression of the complexity of the debate as well as of its pitfalls, A Common State between the River Jordan and the Sea is a book to be read by all those seeking to forge a critical analysis of the Palestinian issue. As for Eyal Sivan's film, presenting witness from activists who are either political or members of various associations, from both Jewish and Arab intellectuals, it is excellent.

